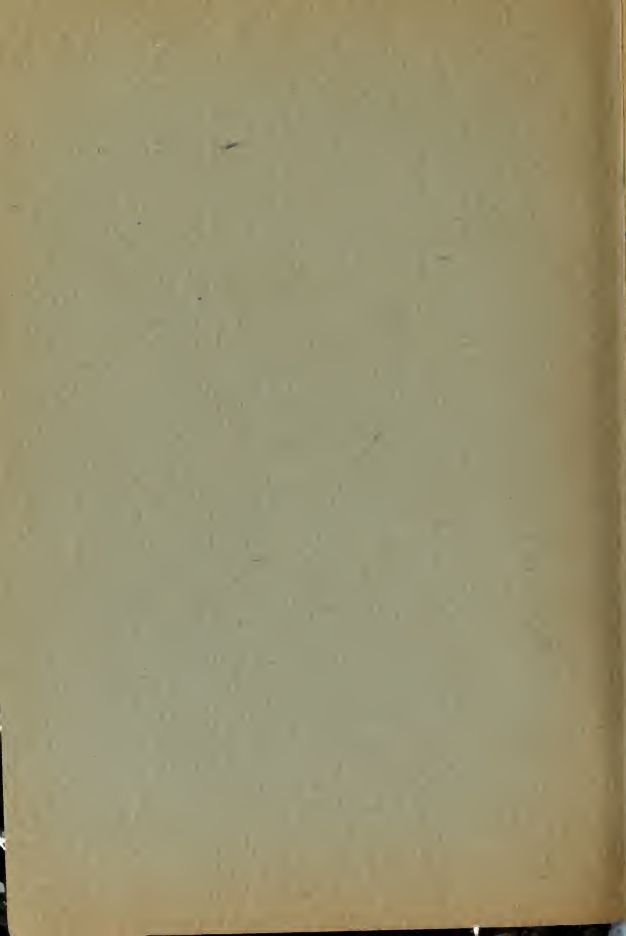


LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 724
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

Address at the Grave of Luther Burbank

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ADDRESS AT THE GRAVE OF LUTHER BURBANK

BY JUDGE BEN LINDSEY

I. WHY I MADE THE ADDRESS

Some rationalist paper should have had a reporter at that "most remarkable funeral ever held," as one expressed it, when, after the platitudes and solemnity of such an occasion, something happened, as though food had been thrown to a famished people. Like the unsuspected crack of a rifle in their midst, that mighty throng of about ten thousand who could get within hearing distance in the park, stopped me, not with the darts of fanatic eyes as I had faced in the mobs of the hooded Klan, but with applause—at a funeral—the first such ever heard in the history of Santa Rosa. Like hungry children they had waited, seemingly, yearning for something. Did you know for what? Was this it? What so many had warned against, too. "Hist—don't mention this infidel business. It's what made all the trouble—maybe they killed him for it. We could wring that reporter's neck for betraying poor dear Luther into saying something he—er—er—he never said—er, well, if he did he was joking—er, he didn't mean it. That reporter'd better not come up here—no tellin' what would happen to him." So the comment ran. "See what that infidel stuff did to Luther. Now let's have a nice respectable funeral. But, why bring this man Lindsey here?"

But Luther himself brought me here. It was a compact we had made one night in his garden (and, by the way, there's a lovely story in that, too long for here), two or three years ago, while we walked together under the stars discussing the mystery of life and death. I'll never forget those hours. And so before he sank to coma, almost with his last consciousness, he sweetly told his wife and Doctor Shaw of that compact and very gently said, "It's a long way to Denver, but I know him and he will come." And I was aroused Sunday morning by shouting neighbors that my 'phone was out of order and California was trying to get me "a message from Luther Burbank." It was as though from the dead. I rushed like mad to get the first train. I flung into my bag the Bible, the *American Mercury*, and two of the recent *Haldeman-Julius Monthlies*, one containing Edgar Waite's article on Burbank's declaration of agnosticism—and then I tried to read a little and think. But I had already read most of what I brought—a strange combination.

Yet somehow I couldn't think. For never once had I doubted Luther's recovery. The answer to the last wire we sent him was reassuring. And hadn't his dear old mother lived till 96—and hadn't I said that night at the garden gate, when he said I must speak at his grave, something like this: "You wiry, seasoned, lovable old rascal, for talking to me like this. You are going to beat your mother's record, and live to be my wife's favorite age, 110, and then you'll have done this for me." But he shook his head—and so we parted.

Now here I was overwhelmed with the great honor, the responsibility; well, it's hard to write how I felt. But I was gagged and tied. Not a line could I write. I could only mourn and think and fill and fill with—perhaps foolish emotion—and give way to tears. Finally, next morning on the train I took out my pad and pencil and wrote so feverishly I could hardly read what I had written when I finished. But it filled all the pads I had, threatening to stretch into a book instead of into a twenty-minute (my limit) funeral talk.

I was met en route without going to San Francisco, and for seventy miles we sped to Santa Rosa. Mrs. Burbank bore up bravely, and little Betty was as sweet as a rose. (By the way, she said "that is what Uncle has gone to be, a lovely rose— isn't it beautiful?" And by the gods of sacred childhood, isn't it?) I had been told already, before I saw Mrs. Burbank, that it was to be a very quiet and simple little ceremony, and no doubt all would be glad I could come, and so forth. I told Mrs. Burbank how I felt as to what should be said, but what others were suggesting instead. I then read a twenty-minute part of what I had written. But several paragraphs I didn't read, lest she might think them too strong. Her approval of what I read encouraged me, so I read again a few paragraphs, "to swat the intolerant clergy," I said. Her black eyes snapped, "You bet. That's what I want, and I know it's just what Luther believed you had the courage to do." So it went in, only as much as that precious twenty minutes would permit.

I made a shorter tribute at the grave by his open casket under the trees of his garden. Poor little Betty, seven years old, stood by me and the thing nearly choked me with tears; but I rallied and went through all right. Mayor Rolfe of San Francisco was the first to shake me by the hand. He said, "That was the bravest thing I ever heard." But why brave? I could do nothing else. Yet I thought his comment was interesting, coming from a man in public office in a very conventional town. It was the first word or reaction I had.

The unusual character of the whole event is such that it must not be neglected. I talked with Mrs. Burbank as I hurried away yesterday. She is contemplating a memorial volume. It seems to me that it should include the amazing things Luther Burbank penciled just before his death, as yet seen only by a few intimate friends. What a tragedy—he had only begun to write, as though feeling the end when awful hiccoughs seized him, which became his chief physical distress.

Very few people with whom I talked in Santa Rosa saw anything in the "infidel incident," anything but a "most regrettable" one. They seemed to resent it bitterly that anyone should have been guilty of letting him say such things. "It took his time and mind from his real work." "It saddened and weakened him to get such terrible letters, to have the prayers being offered up for him—all because he had been betrayed into such a terrible mistake."

Dr. Joseph H. Shaw, as wonderful a man as he is a wise physician, told me: "Luther did

not suffer (as has been reported) from the commotion and attacks that followed his now famous infidel interview. He merely smiled at their fury and really enjoyed the whole thing hugely." No, that was not the cause, or even a contributing cause, unless it added a little to his physical labors at a time when he needed all his strength to fight off colds and flu germs that are so prevalent at this time of year. And then, curiously enough, he had never been so mentally alert in years, so he believed he did not need the usual relaxation of a nap at the end of the day's work, and they could not prevail upon him to take it. In a word, he overtaxed his strength when he needed it most. No wise man—or crank who only killed his time—was denied an interview. This was more wearing than he knew.

II. THE ADDRESS

*Delivered at the Memorial Service for Luther Burbank at Doyle Park, Santa Rosa, California,
Wednesday Afternoon, April 14, 1926.*

In a visit with Luther Burbank two years ago this month he told me that he believed I understood him. He then paid me one of the greatest honors of my life. He requested that I speak here on the occasion of his passing. And so I am here to bring the best tribute of love, affection, appreciation and admiration that I am capable of bringing, as well as to keep the compact we then made. Separated from him though I was by the great open spaces, those spaces were never wide enough to keep from my mind and heart the loving friendship of his life. And I am grateful that

distance has not prevented me from keeping the pledge I gave him that precious evening by his garden gate.

And now and here I would speak of some things because of my loyalty and love for him and the sincere, honest feeling of my heart. It is as I believe he would have me speak. It is as I know his wife, whose heart was so attuned to his, would have me speak. If I can accomplish such a task, however feebly, I shall be content.

It was seventy-seven years ago in the little town of Lancaster, Massachusetts, that a spark of energy from the cosmic sea found lodgement in his covering of clay. It functioned in his gentle body with a creative genius such as this planet has seldom known. The fanatical, intolerant orthodoxy of a darker age would have regarded his creations as an impertinent interference with the "laws of God," and his services would have ended in the fires of the stake. But we have advanced on the road of progress and now he is to be forever known as one of the world's greatest benefactors. In the creative improvement of plant life, he is our greatest genius.

It was here in this beautiful valley of Santa Rosa that he found the peace of kindly neighbors, of loving friends and the sweetness of the childhood that he loved. And here in the tenderest bosom of Mother Nature were nourished the children of his brain.

It is impossible to estimate the wealth he has created. It has been generously given to the world. Unlike inventors, in other fields,

no patent rights were given him, nor did he seek a monopoly in what he created. Had that been the case, Luther Burbank would have been perhaps the world's richest man. But the world is richer because of him. In this he found joy that no amount of money could give.

Millions of people in spirit, added to thousands in person, have beaten a path to the door of his humble cottage, all loving, respecting, and revering this gentle, unselfish man. They have come as the Magi, bearing their richest gifts—their heartfelt, loving-kindness and appreciation.

And so we meet him here today, not in death, but in the only immortal life we positively know—his good deeds, his kindly, simple, sinless life of constructive work and loving service to the whole wide world.

These things cannot die. They are cumulative, and the work he has done shall be as nothing to its continuation in the only immortality this brave, unselfish man ever sought, or asked to know.

And now he passes with the Everlasting Change, as the bravest of the brave, the tenderest, loveliest flower in all the gardens of Santa Rosa, in all the gardens of the world.

Here he worked and wrought his marvels with the trees, the vines, the fruits, the grains, and flowers, not forgetting any other living thing. To the birds he gave a new earth, and to the dogs and all such creatures, a new friendship and understanding—all as a part of the embracing kinship of all life. And as the sweetest of all that in the garden grew, he classed a

little child as blood brother to the rose. As the great scientist, rather than the poet that he was, he was the first to speak so beautifully of a child as only another plant—a human plant. To him as to few other men it was given to know, that all comes from the same universal ebb and flow of protoplasmic energy. At once the child of this earth, he was one of the chosen few to give the mighty thrust to send this whirling orb ten thousand years nearer the kingdom of happiness on earth. With that Heaven, here and now, like the unselfish, humble heart that struggled to the end, he was content.

Beyond the change that we call death, but which to him was ever a part of life, since “life” and “change” were to him identical, he neither asked nor sought a place by the stupidly gorgeous gates of pearl in the hazy heaven of the pathetic childhood of the race—a race as yet with half opened eyes, still in its swaddling clothes, though born of millions of years of change, with millions of years yet to go.

He was ever young. So live a spark of the eternal force—life—from whence he came is never dimmed by time. And then, he loved. And lovers mature, but never age. “I love everybody,” he said, “I love everything! I love humanity—I love flowers—I love children—I love my dog—I am a lover of the man Jesus—I am a lover of all things that help.” With such perfect love he was too fine and brave to be orthodox.

And so in the face of the misunderstandings of the ignorant, and the revilings of the malic-

ious, he dared to say he was what he was, as the light of life had given him the courage to see and say.

Though his spirit was as sweet as the gentlest zephyr that ever kissed favorite roses, it did not save him from the bigotry of an age still idolatrous, still savage in its intolerance. Beneath its veneer of hypocrisy, called civilization, a big part of humanity still resents the right of men to think, to express their honest views about life and death. But, if any think they have crucified this man, they are mistaken. Their maledictions passed him by as the idle wind. He was defending the rights of man as against the mists of dogma with its brutal mythical tyrant that some yet call God—the Moloch who consigned innocent, little unbaptized children to a fiery hell, or to utter darkness, or who burns the creatures that he has made, knowing when he made them that they were made to burn.

It is time that the Christian religion should join Luther Burbank in his defense against the blasphemies and sacrileges it has suffered from the sixteenth century witch-burning religious reactionaries who still infest it. In the spirit of Burbank's meaning, he will have the support of all the progressive thinkers who wish to save a tottering institution from the dry rot of outworn theology.

I am not here to apologize for his fearless faith, but rather to commend his courage and glory in it. This is the attitude of all honest people, whether they agree or not with his approach to the problems of life and death.

With the bravery of a lion and the courage of the great martyrs of history, into the faces of those of the intolerant clergy he flung his challenge, bold and clear, "I nominate myself an infidel, as a challenge to thought for those who are asleep." Thus nature's gardener was doing in the garden of human plants what he has done so well in the garden of fruits and flowers. For in no other way could so much good have been done by one man in so short a time. That garden needs watering; it needs better tending; it needs to be relieved from the choking weeds of the past. In time, by all but fanatics, he will be thanked for startling people into thought.

One of his last utterances was: "Quantity production has been the half-conscious efforts of man to replenish the earth, to fight for supremacy, to produce slaves and for the benefit of real estate agents. Quality production will have to secure the earnest attention of mankind now and in the future, or the race will topple over to destruction from its weight of weeds—morons, idiots, insane, criminals, paupers."

And again: "Proud, garrulous, conceited man is a bundle of forces, a product of nature—evolution—and like every other organized force must adapt himself to meet immutable laws of the universe or perish. The natural laws of gravity, chemistry and attraction, cohesion, etc., cannot be set aside."

As great as were his contributions to the material wealth of this planet, the ages yet to come, that shall better understand him, will give first place in judging the importance of

his work to what he has done for the betterment of human plants and the strength they shall gain, through his courage, to conquer the tares, the thistles and the weeds. Then no more shall we have a mythical God that smells of brimstone and fire; that confuses hate with love; a God that binds up the minds of little children, as other heathen bind up their feet—little children equally helpless to defend their precious right to think and choose and not be chained from the dawn of childhood to the dogmas of the dead.

Luther Burbank will rank with the great leaders who have driven heathenish gods back into darkness, forever from this earth. And all that he spoke was but the awe in which he stood before a great unknown force, and his courage was but the reverence in which he held this great unseen.

He never doubted some such controlling force in the universe, call it what you will. He dared to voice the noblest faith of all—the sweetest and the best—the faith of honest doubt—the fearlessness to hold it fast in the light he had.

Luther Burbank had a philosophy that actually works for human betterment, that dares to challenge the superstition, hypocrisy, and sham, which so often have worked for cruelties, inquisitions, wars and massacres. Superstition that stood across the road of Progress, commanded, not by a god or gods, but the meanest devils that we know—Ignorance, Intolerance, Bigotry, Fanaticism, and Hate. The prejudiced beneficiaries of organized theology refused to

see what Burbank, the gifted child of Nature, saw with a vision as crystal as theirs is dense and dark. And so they assailed him.

One of the saddest spectacles of our times is the effort of hidebound theologians, still desperately trying to chain us to the past—in other forms that would still invoke the inquisitions, the fears, and the bigotries of the dark ages, and keep the world in chains. The chains of lies, hypocrisies, taboos, and the superstitions, fostered by the dying, but still the organized, relentless outworn theology of another age. They refuse to see that in their stupid lust for power they are endangering all that is good.

Little children will be taught to know that evil could no more blossom from this lovely human plant than the thistles could spring from the creations of his gardens. And so this fearless heart has brought us nearer the day when Youth will kindle other flames than those of avenging Gods—flames that shall consume alone the superstitions, fears, hates, and threats that held their minds in chains. For had he not said "CHILDREN ARE THE GREATEST SUFFERERS FROM OUTGROWN THEOLOGIES"?

I once told him the story of the little girl, with the vandal gang, who broke the stained glass window of the "other church." "He wasn't our God," she said, "and he couldn't hurt you, so we broke his face in." "But," I said, "haven't all the churches the same God?" Her lovely eyes still flashing fanatic fires from the buried past, and still in the grip of sloughing

hands that reach from graves and held her tight, this pathetic, helpless child, still screamed the retort of superstition's night. "No! Never! Our God is the right God and he is much the biggest. I know. I have seen their 'pitchers' and our God has longer whiskers, a bigger ring around his head and the light squirts farther."

And now, with his kindly help to their right to think, they will win in the mighty rebellion of modern Youth that is the glory of our time. They then will better know the good as well as the evil, the true as well as the false, the superstition and the savagery, the wisdom and the folly of the religion of their fathers. They will read its books with unfettered, open minds, with the precious right to think, to *disbelieve* as well as to *believe*, to *reject* as well as to *accept*, as the light of a scientific age shall illuminate and reveal. Reason and love shall then have unhampered flow, as like sparkling waters of life, from human plants set free by the Burbanks of the battling hosts of science against the dogmas of the dark in the Armageddon of our time.

Luther Burbank had none of the egotism or selfishness of the average man. In the orthodox threat of eternal punishment for sin—which he knew was often synonymous with yielding up all liberty and freedom—and in its promise of an immortality, often held out for the sacrifice of all that was dear to life, the right to think, the right to one's mind, the right to choose, he saw nothing but cowardice. He shrank from such ways of thought as a flower from the icy blasts of death. As shown

by his work in life, contributing billions of wealth to humanity, with no more return than the maintenance of his own breadline, he was too humble, too unselfish, to be cajoled with dogmatic promises of rewards as a sort of heavenly bribe for righteous conduct here. And by the threats of hell he was too wise and brave to shape the conduct of his life. He knew that the man who fearlessly stands for the right, regardless of the "threat of punishment" or the "promise of reward," was the real man. This man-made code, so typical of the childhood of the race, to his honest, gentle nature smacked too much of appeals to fear, egotism, and cupidity, more often part of selfishness than "instinctive" knowledge of the unknown.

Rather was he willing to accept eternal sleep, or whatever mystic change might bring, in returning to the elements from whence he came, for in his lexicon "change" was "life." Here he was content to mingle as a part of the whole, as the raindrop from the sea performs its sacred service in watering the land to which it is assigned, that two blades may grow instead of one, and then, its mission ended, goes back to the bosom of the ocean from whence it came. With such service, with such a life as gardener to the lilies of the field, not forgetting the minds of the little children there, in his return to the bosom of infinity, he has not lost himself. There he has found himself, is a part of the cosmic sea of eternal force, eternal energy. And thus he lived and always will live.

And you, his faithful wife, and neighbors, here in this lovely city, nestling in gardens of fruit and flowers, closest to the real miracle-maker that he was, shall know that he is not dead. While you will miss his kindly smile and the radiant presence of his personality, as the flesh-colored, ever genial, spark of life that you could see—still, unseen, he walks in our midst, in his work.

Thomas Edison, who believes very much as Luther Burbank, once discussed with me immortality. He pointed to the electric light, his invention, saying: "There lives Tom Edison." So Luther Burbank lives. He lives forever in the myriad fields of strengthened grain, in the new forms of fruits and flowers, and plants, and vines, and trees, and above all, the newly watered gardens of the human mind, from whence shall spring human freedom that shall drive out false and brutal gods. The gods are toppling from their thrones. They go before the laughter and the joy of the new childhood of the race, *unshackled* and *unafraid*.

LUTHER BURBANK'S LAST RITES

BY MAYNARD SHIPLEY

In response to an invitation by telephone to come to the home that was but yesterday Luther Burbank's, I boarded the stage for Santa Rosa. Boy Scouts, who venerated the great lover of nature and humankind, stood guard at the gate, and lined each side of the gravel pathway to his door. There was room in the modest dwelling only for those whom Wilbur Hall,

the author (an old friend of the family, who was in charge of the private services), called "close friends" and "dear ones."

I handed the nearest scout my card and said, "I am expected." Then I passed into the house and was welcomed by Hall, an old acquaintance. We clasped hands, and both looked into the room at the left of the entrance, where lay so peacefully, shrouded with flowers, what remained of the man whom we both loved. Nearest to him lay some baby pink roses, placed there by his little niece, Betty Jane, who told her aunt afterward: "I said my prayer for Uncle Luther. I said, 'I hope you will grow into beautiful flowers.'"

Save for a few minutes only, at the moment of greeting, there was an entire absence of gloom. Voices broke for an instant, it is true; but there was no funeral atmosphere; no black crepe or black dress was in the house; there were no sepulchral tones, no sobs. Mrs. Burbank was dressed in a light striped material; her friend and companion, Miss Gladys Kenney, wore white.

I was soon seated alone in what had been Burbank's study, or private office. The swivel chair at the desk seemed so sadly abandoned. I had not realized that a chair could be so eloquent in its silent emptiness. I pictured the great lover of birds, animals, men, trees and flowers seated there. Involuntarily I scanned his desk. What was he reading just before he was taken to his bedroom, recognizably a very sick man? A number of books and pamphlets lay on the desk. I noted in particular Stein-

metz's *Relativity and Space*, and—could you guess?—a recent issue of the *Haldeman-Julius Monthly*.

Soon I heard Hall's voice requesting that the guests in the room next to the office retire to adjoining rooms. The time had come for the sad march to the "cedar of Lebanon" across the road. There Burbank's grave was to be, in the yard of the old home where he had lived with his beloved mother. He was to rest beneath the overhanging branches of the great cedar, brought to its present majesty by the care of one who *knew* trees.

Six men raised the flower-decked casket, and the friends followed. The bereaved wife was somehow placed unobserved at the head of the procession. Reverently the march began. No audible sobs—only tightening at many throats, a few tears trickling down the cheeks of men who seldom wept.

Outside the gateway was a battery of four motion-picture machines. My first (momentary) impression was not favorable. Then I thought, "Why not?" Here was being visualized the love and homage that follow the life-work of an "infidel"—the tender, loving homage rendered by "all sorts and conditions" of men, from Catholic priests to the dreaded "infidels" of the Fundamentalists and the Cecil DeMille "movies."

I said "Catholic priests." I mean this literally. During the earlier public services in Doyle Park, several Roman Catholic priests were seen in the audience. And earlier in the day two priests visited the Burbank home and

were left alone with the lifeless body of the great scientist. A few moments later they were seen on their knees praying to their God for the repose of the soul of one whose soul had never known anything but repose and confidence and good cheer in the face of "the Great All." Such an act on the part of these clerics could have been inspired only by love and veneration. Alas, that ignorance and superstition could so easily have influenced just such men in other times to help burn even so loving and gentle a man at the stake in the same spirit of devotion and sincerity!

So we marched, two abreast, to the grave, which was covered with plants, concealing the boards over the open pit beneath. Thus (as Wilbur Hall wrote later), "dear friends and loved ones, brave under a heavy load of sorrow such as a loving and sympathetic world, could not entirely share, went with the Big Chief to his pleasant home, their shoulders back because they knew that he would have them go that way."

There was, indeed, "no heavy nor lugubrious quality" to the simple service. The high note of victory, the ringing words that spoke of work well done and a life well lived, were in all that was said. The Beloved Infidel had willed it so. "Don't worry," he told those about him, as he faced "the beautiful touch of death." "Everything is being done for me that can be done. You can help most by being gay and bright." And then—his last words—"I'm better now."

Said Hall: "When the end came [there had

been "a benevolent conspiracy to keep hope alive"], . . . there were some terrible and tragic hours. But . . . on Sunday morning, shoulders went back and life turned to smiling; and though we all choked up, and little things would break us down, it was not a House of Death, but a house of Life Everlasting, in confidence and love and gallant memories of the Big Chief."

When we were all assembled at the grave, the casket was opened, and the Rev. C. S. S. Dutton, pastor of the First Unitarian Church of San Francisco, who had married Luther and Elizabeth Burbank ten years before, stepped forward and made a short address. He quoted these words from *The Story of My Heart*, by Richard Jefferies:

Know the extreme value of human life. Reflect on this and strew human life with flowers; save every hour for the sunshine, let your labor be so ordered that in future times the loved ones may dwell longer with those who loved them; open your minds; exalt your souls; widen the sympathies of your heart; make joy real now to those you love, and help forward the joy of those yet to be born.

No more fitting epitaph for Luther Burbank could be uttered.

"That was the quality of the life of our dear friend," Mr. Dutton went on. "It perfectly expresses the spirit in which he lived and the spirit in which he faced this great emergency of death. He built his life on human values, not the values of the pedants and the abstract thinkers. He was, above everything, a humanist.

"Our finest hope is finest memory," said

George Eliot. It is on the memory of such a life that the beloved wife and dearest friends must build their hopes and by which they may well order their living.

"We call this death. It is not death, but such a strange form of life that we must needs blunder for its name. . . . The memory of integrity, the memory of beauty, the memory of service, the memory of selflessness and a gallant and uncompromising heart: on such we build our palace of the soul, our heaven, the whole future that is ours.

"Let us but remember this heritage which he has left, and all is well, and shall be, to our several ends."

At an orthodox funeral service, at this moment a hymn would have been sung. Not so here, "under the cedar of Lebanon." What we now heard was a song that Luther Burbank had often requested his friend Dorothy Reagan Talbot to sing—"Silver Threads Among the Gold." It was beautifully and tenderly rendered. But it didn't help us to "throw our shoulders back." Nor did it make the loving service of Judge Ben Lindsey easier as he stepped forward to pay his last beautiful tribute to his beloved friend. In a voice faltering with deep emotion, the great Denver jurist and lover of nature and mankind made an address which will never be forgotten by those who heard it.

In accordance with Burbank's own request, Wilbur Hall closed the simple ceremony by reading Ingersoll's beautiful eulogy on the death of his brother.

Yes, even Catholic priests came to Burbank's

home to pay him their last loving reverence. But no Fundamentalists came and several of them left the open-air services in Doyle Park, offended in their narrow dogmatism by Lindsey's ringing challenges. And even as Burbank lay in his coffin, an Episcopal bishop, Dr. William Hall Moreland of the diocese of Sacramento, in the guise (doubtless sincere) of a tribute to the great naturalist dared to say:

"Graces of the spiritual life are not produced by intellectual convictions but in minds open to receive the Spirit of Christ. Noble characters are attained by many in spite of errors of opinion.

"Luther Burbank's theological ideas need not be taken seriously. He was born, reared and atmosphered in a Christian environment. He was the product of Christianity although he did not realize it. Think what a different man he would have been if he had been born among savages, and never known the light and freedom of Christianity.

"Love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, meekness, self-control appeared in Luther Burbank's life. These flowers of religion come from Christ alone."

Evidently the bishop has never read Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, or the other great Stoics. But how nobly Judge Lindsey answered such allegations: "Luther Burbank had none of the egotism or selfishness of the average man of our time," and so on.

Lindsey's frank challenge to the traditionalists, in his long speech at the open-air services,

would have delighted Burbank's heart. Unnoticed in the crowd of between eight and ten thousand, Mrs. Burbank sat nearby in an automobile, and heard his glorious tribute to the great man who had departed. It is no wonder that several times the vast audience burst into tumultuous, irrepressible applause, while the few intolerant bigots present slunk away.

For, as Lindsey indicated, and in spite of the answer furnished by Bryan's death at Dayton, the Fundamentalists will claim that the religious controversy in which Burbank engaged caused or hastened his death. This is totally untrue.

Two nights before he was taken ill, as he and Mrs. Burbank walked home together from a picture show, he complained of "pains in his lungs." The next night they had guests and an evening of the music Burbank so loved. The following day he worked all morning in his garden, and told his wife he had never done so good a day's work. But that evening the pains reappeared, his devoted Dr. Shaw—a fine physician and a splendid friend—was called in, and he was found to be suffering from the heart disease which, with gastro-intestinal complications, brought his noble life to an end. As a victim of the same affliction, I know the physical symptoms; and there are many besides his beloved widow to testify how little he minded the storm of abuse which his brave statements of a few weeks earlier had evoked.

Mrs. Burbank has been appointed sole administrator of his estate, and will continue the

work of his experimental gardens, under the direction of a very young man named Henderson, who came to Burbank three years ago, and whom the great horticulturist himself picked as his successor, saying he was a genius. The Sebastopol gardens will be sold to Stanford University for experimental use. Some sort of memorial to Burbank will be erected in Santa Rosa, where he lived for fifty years; though he himself said, "Don't build a monument; plant a tree."

The real burden of his loss falls on the splendid woman who made his last years so happy, and who, in spite of the differences in their ages, was so true a helpmate to him. And Mrs. Burbank can be trusted to carry on—she is one of the world's elect. The day they laid him under the "cedar of Lebanon," she put in his pockets as he lay under the flowers a few touching little souvenirs of their life together—some letters, some childish drawings by little Betty Jane, a toy from her own childhood that he had liked, the whistle with which he used to call his now disconsolate little dog, Bonita. Then she turned her face to the future, dedicated to continuing the work which was the life of the husband she so deeply loved.

And so we must all face the future, turning only for one last greeting to that beautiful spirit that was called Luther Burbank. With eyes full of tears, but "our shoulders back," we echo the words of the old Roman poet: "And now forever, brother, hail and farewell."

BAPTISTS LIE ABOUT LUTHER BURBANK

BY WALTER W. LICGETT

When Luther Burbank died—at a ripe old age—a few weeks after his world famous avowal of infidelity, it was a foregone conclusion that scores of Christian ministers would declare that he was struck down by their jealous Jehovah. (Of course, when William Jennings Bryan died after the Scopes “monkey trial” it was a case of being “carried to his reward.”)

It also was an equally foregone conclusion that before many months elapsed these same Christians—with scant regard for consistency—would be industriously circulating the time-worn “death-bed repentance” canard which inevitably has followed the demises of Voltaire, Thomas Paine, Ingersoll and every other outstanding Freethinker. No thorough-going Fundamentalist can resist this safe and easy form of slander.

Knowing that this infamous lie would unfailingly make its appearance in one of the “religious journals” that circulate among the Baptist and Methodist yokels of the hinterlands, I promptly made arrangements with a clipping bureau and waited like a cat watching a rat hole, prepared to spike the false report the moment it showed its nose.

I did not have long to wait. On June 11, exactly two months after Luther Burbank was buried with impressive rites at Santa Rosa, *The Crusaders' Champion*, official organ of the Bible Crusaders of America, had an editorial

entitled "Luther Burbank on His Death Bed," starting the circulation of the usual stock lie which by this time doubtless has been reprinted in scores of other "religious journals"—and I venture to affirm that not one of these pious libelers has taken the trouble to attempt to verify this ridiculous report.

The editorial in question, which appears on page 9 of the June 11 issue of *The Crusaders' Champion*, follows in full:

BURBANK ON HIS DEATHBED

A letter of unusual interest was recently received by Dr. F. F. Brown, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tenn., relating to the last hours of Luther Burbank, whose utterances a few weeks ago attracted such wide-spread publicity. The letter was written by a member of Dr. Brown's church, who is now in San Francisco, and from it we quote the following extract:

"The only rest he got during one night was when the woman who kept vigil recited to him over and over the twenty-third Psalm. This woman is the doctor's secretary and also my friend, and she told me. After all that was said pro and con he no doubt was putting his trust in One who was able to comfort. . . . Mr. Burbank was a member of a Baptist church in the East. He had neglected his church. . . ."

It is not so surprising after all, especially if one recalls the death-hours of other men who professed agnosticism and atheism. In the hour of death the heart of man, regardless of his former declarations, many times turns to the God who gave him life, and to the spiritual contemplation of the world which he is soon to enter.

Dr. Brown is so well and favorably known throughout the South that no question as to the validity of the letter can arise. The high esteem in which he is held was manifested in the fact that he preached the convention sermon at the recent annual meeting of Southern Baptists at Houston.

When the editorial came to my attention, I immediately wrote to Dr. F. F. Brown, who vouched for the authenticity of this fantastic tale. I was not foolish enough to challenge his veracity. I was afraid that if I did so the reverend gentleman would "pass the buck." Therefore, without misrepresenting my attitude, I wrote Dr. Brown asking for the name of the member of his church who originally had written the letter containing the statement that Luther Burbank had turned to religious consolation.

"This is highly important, if true," I concluded, "and I do not believe it has had the publicity it deserves."

You see, I baited my letter with the promise of increased publicity and Dr. Brown rose to the bait like a hungry pike. (I am keeping my promise of "increased publicity.") Here is his reply in full:

October 22, 1926.

Mr. Walter W. Liggett,
Box 122, Manomet, Mass.
Dear Mr. Liggett:

I have received your letter of October 14, calling my attention to the statement quoted from me in the "Crusaders' Champion" of July 11. The lady who wrote me the letter is Miss Cora Bishop, 2639 E. Fifth avenue, Knoxville, Tennessee. She is absolutely reliable.

Cordially yours,
F. F. BROWN.

On receipt of this letter I immediately sent Miss Cora Bishop a courteous letter stating that Dr. Brown had informed me she had written the letter mentioned in the editorial and asking if she would give me the name of the doctor's secretary who had informed her that Luther

Burbank had sought religious consolation in his last hours. Once more I concluded with the statement that I did not believe this story had had the "publicity which it deserves."

In the meanwhile, I ascertained the name of Luther Burbank's physician—Dr. Joseph H. Shaw of Santa Rosa, California—and wrote him a carefully worded, non-committal letter, quoting in full the editorial in *The Crusaders' Champion*, then asking if he had a woman secretary, and, if so, whether she had given the above-mentioned information to Miss Cora Bishop of Knoxville, Tennessee.

Dr. Shaw responded promptly, as follows:

November 2, 1926.

Mr. Walter W. Liggett,
Manomet, Mass.

Mr. Dear Mr. Liggett:

Your interesting bit of information—just received. I hasten to answer, and to correct so arrant a misstatement.

My secretary, in common with all Luther Burbank's friends, knew him as "the most religious man she has ever met." He was a Naturalist. His God was Love—and he needed no "sop" of scripture repeating to comfort him. All the vital truths of the world were lived in his life and work.

Miss Bishop served as companion to my mother for a few weeks last spring. She left Santa Rosa, however, sometime before Mr. Burbank's decease—my mother having no need of her longer. We did not hear from her until some time in late July when my secretary received a letter containing a statement to the effect that she (Miss Bishop) was glad that Mr. Burbank had the comfort of these great truths at the end, and intimating that she (my secretary) had read them to him. Immediately she wrote Miss Bishop asking for a copy of anything that might have appeared in print. To this date we have received no word from her, nor were we aware of her present whereabouts. She was in the employ of Brown.

Mr. Burbank passed on, as he lived—loving every living thing and doing his best to make the world better for all. That was a big program for any man.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Brown, Miss Bishop and yourself.

Yours very truly,
JOSEPH HUGHES SHAW, M.D.

The facts speak for themselves, but Dr. Shaw is milder than I choose to be when he refers to this damnable attempt to slander the intellectual integrity of Luther Burbank as "an arrant misstatement."

I also sent Mrs. Luther Burbank a copy of *The Crusaders' Champion* editorial and asked her for the facts. From the widow of the great humanitarian I received a denial almost as fast as it could be carried by the mails.

Mrs. Burbank's letter follows in full:

November 4, 1926.

Mr. Walter W. Liggett,
Manomet, Mass.

My Dear Mr. Liggett:

I am in receipt of your letter and in reply quote to you from the introductory chapter of a book—*The Harvest of the Years*—now in the hands of the publishers.

"He (Luther Burbank) lived in entire confidence that good work well done, sincere motives and loyalty to high ideals formed the whole duty of man; to these he added for the creation of a real heaven on earth, the single essential—LOVE. As far as in him lay he lived his creed; he died without in the slightest amending or altering it, and stories that, in the end, he recanted or turned to religious teachings or teachers for consolation or comfort are, at the best apocryphal; at worst, impudent falsehood. No man, in death, ever presented a countenance more beautiful, peaceful or serene. He was like a child asleep."—By Wilbur Hall.

Luther Burbank knew from the first day of his illness that it was his final one and a few days

before his going talked with me regarding the arrangements for the funeral. His wishes were carried out. Judge Ben Lindsey gave the address—a friend sang "Silver Threads Among the Gold"—the Unitarian minister from San Francisco spoke a few words dealing with a life well lived and stressing the immortality of influence and Wilbur Hall read the eulogy pronounced by Robert C. Ingersoll on the death of his brother. He was buried in his garden.

Luther Burbank suffered from hiccoughs very severely during his final illness and it was necessary to give opiates to induce sleep. As to whether or not someone recited the 23rd Psalm I do not know. If someone says they did—I have no reason to disbelieve them, but Dr. Brown is certainly willing to base conclusions on rather thin evidence when he assumes that Luther Burbank's philosophy of Life did not serve him also in his hour of death.

Thanking you for your letter and hoping to see you should you come this way, I am,

Sincerely yours,

ELIZABETH BURBANK.

Three weeks passed without my hearing from the "reliable" Miss Cora Bishop, but on November 16, *after she had received a copy of Dr. Shaw's letter to me*, she broke her long silence with the following letter:

1523 West Clinch Ave., Knoxville, Tenn.

Mr. Walter W. Liggett,
P. O. Box 122, Manomet, Mass.

My Dear Mr. Liggett:

Your letter of October 25 was duly received. Reply has been delayed due to the fact that I have been in the process of moving.

The story as you have recited it is exactly as told to me by Mrs. Mae Baker Berryman, Dr. Shaw's secretary. Dr. F. F. Brown, my pastor; also myself have received copies of letter to you from Dr. Shaw in which he "Hastens to correct so arrant a mis-statement."

I left Santa Rosa exactly one week before Mr. Burbank's passing, and at which time Mr. Burbank was very ill. It was the day after Mrs. Berryman

kept vigil at the Burbank home that she told me the story with no intimation whatever that it was a secret. After leaving Santa Rosa, she wrote me that she had the pleasure of writing Mr. Lindsey's funeral oration before it was given.

As Dr. Shaw stated, I received a letter from Mrs. Berryman, asking where I saw the story of the Psalm, and that she would write a long explanation "Pronto." I immediately replied that the story she told me was the only one I knew—to which letter she never answered.

Under the circumstances, I will ask you to give the matter no further publicity without Mrs. Berryman's consent as she seems to be, from Dr. Shaw's letter, in an embarrassing position.

I gave the story to John E. Brown, for whom I was taking up work when I left Santa Rosa; also to my pastor, Dr. F. F. Brown of Knoxville First Church, because I felt that millions of others who ALSO loved and admired Luther Burbank would be interested to know about it, not that I cared the least bit for publicity or notoriety—that is not in my system—and I am mighty sorry if anyone is damaged because of the story getting into print. Mrs. Berryman is a very brilliant woman, a writer of ability, having written a number of poems magnifying Mr. Burbank, and I recall she also told me "He was the most religious person she ever met." Am sending Dr. Brown and Dr. Shaw copies of this letter. Yours very truly,

CORA ANNA BISHOP.

Miss Bishop's letter seems to raise a question of veracity between herself and Dr. Shaw and his secretary as to whether Mrs. Berryman actually recited the twenty-third Psalm over the unconscious form of the freethinking scientist as he lay in his final illness under the influence of opiates, but, as Mrs. Burbank pertinently points out, even if this did occur, "Dr. Brown is certainly willing to base conclusions on rather thin evidence when he assumes that Luther Burbank's philosophy of life did not serve him also in his hour of death."



